CONGRESSMAN BOUCHER ANNOUNCES FEDERAL FUNDING TO AID DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SERVICES IN PORTIONS OF SMYTH COUNTY

$10,000 Federal Grant Will Be Used to Plan Additional Broadband Deployment in the Towns of Saltville and Chilhowie

(Washington, D.C.) - U.S. Representative Rick Boucher announced today that the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is providing a federal grant in the amount of $10,000 to the towns of Chilhowie and Saltville to create a strategic telecommunications plan for extending broadband service to users within the communities. The total project cost is $20,000. The Town of Chilhowie, along with the Town of Saltville and Smyth County will provide $10,000 in matching funds for the project. **"The federal funding which I am announcing today will point the way for extending high-speed Internet services to Chilhowie and Saltville, a step that will promote economic development and bring the many benefits of broadband to these towns,"** Boucher said.

Currently a fiber optic backbone delivers broadband services to the main industrial parks in Chilhowie and Saltville. The federal funding announced today will be used to identify the best way to extend high-speed Internet service from the main industrial parks over the "last mile" to Internet users in the Chilhowie and Saltville area which are currently unable to connect to the fiber-optic backbone. Planners will assess the needs of area businesses and determine the optimum mechanism for broadband deployment, either through direct wire or wireless broadband technologies. The study is the first essential step in deploying high-speed Internet services throughout both communities.

"The economic development of Southwest Virginia is my top priority, and facilitating the deployment of broadband services is a fundamental part of our economic development strategy for the region. Today's announcement represents the necessary first step in the further deployment of these services in Smyth County, the presence of which is essential in attracting industries seeking locations for expansion, attracting new companies with technology-based jobs, and aiding locally-owned small businesses in expanding operations," Boucher concluded.

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